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THE NEGLECTED MAJORITY.

BY- HOWE, HAROLD, II

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THIS SPEECH EXAMINES THE STATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES, AND NOTES THAT THERE IS A NEED FOR GREATER CONCERN FOR THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT COLLEGE BOUND. THE NEW FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATION CAN ENABLE SCHOOL SYSTEMS TO REMEDIATE THE EDUCATIONAL DEFICITS OF DISADVANTAGED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS. EDUCATION FOR THE DISADVANTAGED CAN ALSO BE HELPED BY EDUCATORS' EFFORTS TO INCREASE THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF SLUM YOUTH AND TO REVERSE CURRENT PREFERENTIAL TEACHER PLACEMENT POLICIES WHICH ASSIGN THE LEAST EXPERIENCED TEACHERS TO THE MORE DIFFICULT SCHOOLS. SPECIALIZED TRAINING FOR PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS OF THE DISADVANTAGED IS FELT TO BE IMPORTANT. ALSO, JOB TRAINING AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ARE IMPERATIVE FOR THOSE STUDENTS WHO DO NOT AND WILL NOT HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CURRICULUMS OUGHT TO BE RENOVATED TO CREATE AN ATTITUDE OF RESPECT FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING. IT IS FELT, MOREOVER, THAT THE IDEAL IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IS THE COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL. THIS PAPER IS AN ADRESS PRESENTED BEFORE THE ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS (DALLAS, TEXAS, MARCH 1, 1967). (NH)

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THE NEGLECTED MAJORITY*

An Address by Harold Howe II
U.S. Commissioner of Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

According to a recent item in the New York Times, a government official who should know what he is talking about says that the state of education in the secondary schools is deplorable.

He warns that low teaching standards and a serious dropout problem are harming the economy at a time when it needs far more workers who combine broad general knowledge with a technical education.

He points to outdated and superficial approaches to the teaching of physics, saying that more emphasis is put on the history of physics than on the basic principles. He enters the same indictment against the teaching of the biological sciences, mathematics, and other subjects.

He reports that in some parts of the country about half of all students drop out of school after the eighth grade and that teachers are not doing enough to impress upon teenagers the importance of staying in school.

He concludes with the charge that many students who do finish high school finish without having learned much.

Since this sounds like a compendium of problems you may find painfully familiar, I think it is illuminating to note that the dateline of this news story was not Washington, not one of our State capitals, but Moscow. The government spokesman was the Minister of Education of the

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Russian Republic and he was talking about secondary education in the Soviet Union.

I begin with this seemingly irrelevant critique of Soviet education because I think it gives us a useful perspective for reviewing the progress in our own secondary schools. I believe we have come farther faster than we realize. But our progress, while noteworthy, is also lopsided.

First, let me say in passing that while we wish the Russians success with their education problems, it is perhaps comforting to know that many of our difficulties are not uniquely American. As secondary school principals, I hope you take solace in the knowledge that your counterparts in Leningrad--or Liverpool or Tel Aviv for that matter--contend with many of the same issues. The British, for example, are short of technically trained manpower and long on young people who see their lives and occupational choices circumscribed at an early age by a rigid choice of secondary educational institutions. Breaking with their own tradition, the British now look to the comprehensive high school as a way to advance more young people academically and at the same time prepare them for better jobs. The French have maintained for years a highly selective, highly academic secondary school system; they too are now seeking ways to serve better a larger proportion of their teenagers.

Indeed, if I were to try to compare what has been developing in secondary education on the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean these last ten years, I would say that Americans have been attempting to make their schools more like the European and Europeans have been reaching in the direction of our comprehensive high school.

American secondary education in its reach for academic quality has arrived at some highly creditable answers. To mention just a few, I would cite first the whole area of curriculum modernization and the efforts to train and retrain teachers which have accompanied it. Another area of change for the better is classroom organization--the assignment of teachers and pupils in flexible groupings that free them from the old constraints of four walls and six set instruction periods in the day. And still another is the way we are learning to deploy the staff and equipment available to us--using teachers to teach, and teacher aids--human and mechanical--to handle routine drill and other classroom duties.

Our secondary schools have perhaps made greatest progress in an area that now seems of particular stress to Soviet educators--the teaching of science, mathematics, and related subjects. I think it is significant that they appear to be asking some of the fundamental questions we asked a decade ago, questions which were on our agenda partly as the result of Soviet scientific successes in space.

Still, I feel reasonably confident that without the pressures from Sputnik our need for more and better scientists and linguists--a need recognized by educators and industry before anyone got into space--would have brought us to the reappraisal on our own. Regardless of the motivation, however, we did come to grips with the problem of how, when, and where to overhaul, revamp or completely retool--as the need indicated--the whole structure of our science, mathematics, and language curriculum. Congress provided the initial thrust--and it is a continuing thrust--with

Federal funds under the National Defense Education Act. But it is important to remember that the education community, from college researcher to classroom teacher, responded to the challenge. So too did State and local authorities who provided funds to match Federal aid. As a result, our elementary schools and, to an even greater degree, our secondary schools, serve us better today than they did 10 years ago.

This is all relatively ancient history, and you know it as well as I do. However, I think it is history with some provocative footnotes which bear on what I want to talk about this morning. First, I think the NDEA experience shows that when the Nation wants a change in a major element of education we can marshall forces of the magnitude necessary to initiate and sustain change. Such change does, however, take a national commitment in terms of money, public support, and the unremitting dedication of educators all along the line. Today a similar commitment, on a far larger scale, is again evident in the public policies and programs of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and other Federal legislation.

Second, I believe the NDEA experience shows that when we are talking about thousands of school districts and millions of youngsters, we have to recognize that it takes time to see patterns of change emerging. Despite early successes in many school districts, only now after 10 years are the NDEA programs having a real effect on what is taught and how it is taught in the majority of science and language classrooms across the country. We may reasonably suppose it will take just as long for the newer Federal programs to have a similar impact. Again, we have early successes--and a

few disappointments. There has been some feeling, I suppose, of pressure to rush into production--perhaps with poorly-conceived projects--to make sure of not missing out on Federal funds. Yet experience has long since taught us that there must be ample lead time for thoughtful planning.

Third, it seems to me that in the post-Sputnik push to improve parts of the academic curriculum, especially in the secondary schools, we have become somewhat myopic about a lot of other things we are supposed to teach. The new biology is also harder biology, and it is usually elected by capable students bound for college. The same is true of the new chemistry, the new Spanish, or the new algebra. So far so good. This is what the National Defense Education Act was initially about. It has since, of course, been considerably broadened to help schools improve English, history, economics, industrial arts, and other course offerings.

But what have we done in the last decade for the millions of students--perhaps the majority of the student body--who are average or poor academically, or average or poor financially, and will not get to college on either count? What have we done for the potential dropouts who look upon school as a reformatory where they serve time simply because they are young? What have we provided in the way of realistic guidance and counseling or practical technical and vocational training to help these youngsters compete for jobs in a highly demanding economy? Most important, what have we done to help them compete with themselves, to awaken the pride and sense of personal worth that is a minimum precondition for effective learning and living? In candor I think we have to say: Not

enough. While maintaining our interest in the able college-bound student, we need to reawaken our concern for that aspect of our secondary schools which is of such great interest to our friends across the Atlantic--their comprehensive quality and their capacity to serve a wide spectrum of student ability and interest.

I grant that a decade ago we did not have Federal programs specifically directed to the disadvantaged or even average student. We have them now.

What concerns me--what I would like to consider with you this morning--is that the secondary schools by and large may not have taken full advantage of the newer Federal programs to the same extent as the elementary schools.

Head Start since the summer of 1965 has reached over one million children, sending many of them into the elementary grades with a new excitement and curiosity about the world of learning. In turn, thousands of elementary schools are using ESEA funds in creative ways to see that this world of learning continues to widen around these and other children. The momentum will dissipate, however--as youngsters advance into the higher grades--unless more junior and senior high schools begin now to plan and carry out projects of similar creativity and scope. Nor can we write off the students already in our secondary schools who could benefit from such projects in the first year or two.

In its first year--1965-66--Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act poured more than $1 billion into 22,000 projects in 17,000 communities in every State in the Nation. These projects reached more

than 8 million children. Two-thirds of these children were in grade 6 and below. This differential does not necessarily mean that the elementary schools tried twice as hard. With a larger enrollment, the need at the elementary level is proportionately greater. More to the point, educators generally agreed that the initial Title I concentration could be most effective with children at the threshold of the learning experience. And I would certainly hope that school districts will continue to give the lower grades a top priority in Title I planning.

At the same time I do not see how we can bypass pupils in the secondary schools whose problems are evident to the faculty if not to themselves. The tenth grader who reads at the sixth grade level, whose arithmetic is weak and whose desire to learn is weaker needs special help as much as a similarly handicapped child in the lower grades. The teenager has had longer to develop his deficiencies; the school system has less time remaining in which to correct them. In low-income districts, I would like to see secondary schools concentrate much of their own energies and a part of their Title I funds on remedial instruction in the basic learning tools. Until slow learners master the mechanics of how to learn and gain some interest in the process, it does not matter much what else we try to teach them. Because of our inability to meet their problems we find a whole new education system growing up in the Job Corps, largely outside the context of the public secondary schools. These young people need this rescue operation now, but if the high schools of the country will respond to the needs of their students we will need it less ten years from now.

Motivating teenagers to learn is a complex business. Federal funds cannot buy motivation although they may help schools experiment with ways to improve it. An understanding teacher, a patient but practical counselor, a principal with an open door and an open mind are often what the teenager needs most. He needs a feeling that somebody cares, that somebody knows his name, that somebody respects him as a human being regardless of his behavior.

These qualities are in short supply in many schools. In slum schools they encounter further attrition. Reared and educated in a middle class environment, most faculty members in poverty area schools may well find themselves at a loss as to how to communicate with the students that now confront them. Middle class values are not the values of the tenement, where there is too little privacy and money on one hand and too much leisure time on the other, and growing up is largely a matter of waiting around on the sidewalk for something to happen.

I would like to see school districts make a concerted effort to close this sociological gap, to use workshops, seminars and other in-service training for teachers, guidance counselors, and other staff members who work with students. I would like to see teachers organizations and school boards alike recognize that their preferential teacher assignment practices may have the effect of shortchanging those students who need the most professional and the most experienced career teachers. I would like to see colleges and universities recognize the special problems of the inner city schools in preparing young people for teaching careers.

One of the ways colleges and universities are now joining the schools to prepare teachers with special skills and dedication is through the Teacher Corps. This small enterprise with 1,227 trainees in 275 schools is in danger of being churned up in the Washington political mill for reasons which have little to do with its merits. Two examples, I think, show the hope and promise of the Teacher Corps.

Hunter College, for instance, has some Teacher Corps trainees, who grew up in the heart of Harlem, working in a junior high school in Manhattan. They have initiated a special "success class" for low-achievers who are thought to have ability but lack the motivation to learn. The school has encouraged the team to develop its own reading materials and effective methods for teaching arithmetic. The trainees also go into the homes of the pupils, explaining to parents what their children are learning and why. Based on this pilot project, the school principal hopes to get more Teacher Corps interns next September.

The Texas College of Arts and Industries is working closely with five district superintendents to help children of Mexican-American migrant farm workers in the Rio Grande Valley. Teacher Corps interns who are training at the college are teaching these youngsters to read and speak English as a second language. In this case the Corps is providing the first continuing contact with people who speak English correctly. The trainees have made good English a real part of these children's world.

Another resource for the schools and universities and for their effective interaction to serve young people is the Education Professions Act

which President Johnson has just sent to Congress with his Education Message. If Congress acts favorably on this bill, this program will open up possibilities for the training and retraining of all who serve education, including high school principals, superintendents, school board members, all categories of teachers, and the sub-professionals we call teacher aides. This new legislation offers a flexibility not now present in Federal funds to train teachers. Grants could be made to local school districts as well as to institutions of higher education and could be used for all kinds of institutes, workshops, and seminars as well as for the usual forms of university study. Here is legislation which if passed will help you and your staffs launch a constructive attack on the problems of young people in your schools.

So far I have talked about remedial instruction for slow learners and training programs to help the school faculty understand and communicate more effectively with academically and culturally deprived children. Let us assume we can teach these pupils the basic learning skills. Let us also assume the faculty can lick the communications problem and motivate these youngsters to learn. The next question is fairly obvious: How are we going to equip most of them to live and work in a technological society without a college education and, in the case of many, without a high school diploma?

This proposition gets us into the area of vocational and technical education, and in a sense I wish it did not. I know most of the problems and very few of the answers about how and where to fit job training into

the secondary school curriculum. I am nevertheless convinced that it has to be done.

Like the British, we have reached the point where our educational system must assume some responsibility for matching technically demanding jobs with technically competent people. For students who will not get beyond--or even to--the twelfth grade, this training must be available at the high school level. I would not advocate training so specialized that the student knows how transistors are made and little else. I would advocate courses that cover principles--principles in electronics, for instance--that would prepare the student for an entry job in the electronics industry and teach him how to prepare for jobs that do not yet exist.

Taking the broader view, I would like to see our secondary schools use the newer Federal programs to do for students who do not go to college what they have done under the National Defense Education Act for students who do.

Let me rephrase that. I believe it is imperative that secondary education train the majority of students to work for a living with the same care it devotes to the minority who go on to work for a baccalaureate or higher degree.

For a start, I would like to see the same upheaval in the vocational and technical curriculum that NDEA has generated in the academic curriculum. I see no reason why automotive mechanics, for instance, cannot reflect the same critical reexamination, the same innovative responses,

the same high standards for students and criteria for teachers that educators used in developing NDEA-supported academic offerings. It is not enough to just keep on repainting the Model-A, which in my view is all too characteristic of the vocational curriculum in some places.

Many large school districts have vocational high schools, and many of them are good. Some smaller districts have shown real ingenuity in combining resources to offer job training they could not afford alone. Three small Wisconsin districts have pooled resources, including Federal funds under the Vocational Education Act of 1963, to provide courses in foundry, welding, and machine shop operation as well as small engine and automotive mechanics. These skills represent some 85 percent of the job opportunities in this part of Wisconsin. The important thing here is that the school districts went to industry first. Industry stated its manpower needs, suggested course offerings, donated modern machinery for the school shops, and provided metallurgists and other professionals to advise on curriculum problems as they developed.

These efforts are encouraging, but they must be expanded. Secondary education is going to have to bring vocational training into the comprehensive high school, involve business and industry in truly effective curriculum development, and make all or part of this curriculum available to every student. The hour is late for development of a comprehensive curriculum, one that gives vocational offerings equal time--and I might add equal status--with the academic program.

Equal time, equal status, and equal quality of instruction for vocational education require as a start a review and revision by educators

of their own attitudes. To many, vocational training has always been an awkward appendage to the academic curriculum. It never quite fitted and was never really wanted. Until we are prepared to respect it in our own circles, we cannot expect parents or students or the community or industry to consider job training as a necessary function of the school system. Nor can we provide the support services that are equally important--such things as adequate and accurate career counseling, work-study programs, and job placement services.

The President has just asked Congress for new legislation and added appropriations to support innovative pilot projects in all these areas of vocational education. If Congress passes this legislation, you will have new opportunities for experimenting with ways to bring vocational education into alignment with the general education program of the high school and with efforts to serve more completely the student who now becomes a dropout.

There are many possibilities in this new program. At the high school level it could support sub-technical courses for students with special needs--those who could train and work effectively as stockboys, beginning clerks, and custodial maintenance employees. Then there are guidance and counseling, on-the-job-training, and job placement services for vocational students--the potential in these areas is relatively unexplored.

Finally and foremost, the secondary school must seek new ways to make the character of its student body truly comprehensive. Rubbing elbows may bring about as much education as reading, and the question of who rubs

elbows with whom is one our secondary schools cannot dodge as they look to the future.

There is mounting evidence that one of the major leverages we have to produce success in school for those who lack resources and support at home is to place them in school with fellows who are more fortunate. The Equality of Educational Opportunity survey sent to the Congress last July strongly points to this conclusion. The report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, entitled Racial Isolation in the Public Schools and made public only a week ago, carries the argument further. Increasingly we find the forces of law which come from the Congress and the courts and the forces of the American tradition which speaks for equality of opportunity are allying themselves to the proposition that segregated education cannot be quality education. And as these matters are thrust more and more upon our attention, we as responsible educators must find the ways to bring a constructive response from our schools.

Secondary schools, particularly because they are larger and more likely to include a cross-section of society, and because their students have enough maturity to allow very flexible educational arrangements, have a variety of opportunities to bring young Americans together across the boundaries of privilege and underprivilege.

These opportunities come whenever a new school is planned, whenever a community seeks support for a project under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, whenever Title I funds are invested in secondary school activities, and whenever high school principals from

city and suburb engage in conversation about the educational needs of their students. They are opportunities fraught with difficulty as I can tell you from the personal experience of facing them on a national scale. But they are also opportunities which have as much to say about the kind of country America will be fifty years from now as any other choices you have in your schools.

In summary, then, these remarks are addressed to the ideal we seek in secondary education, the truly comprehensive high school. It is in a sense an ideal we may never reach but which gives us a goal to seek. An organization like the NASSP needs a positive program, and what I have been saying is my prescription for such a program in the years ahead.

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